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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001006

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SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: MONITORS HOPE TO PROCEED AS USUAL
DESPITE GSL CRITICISM AND TIGERS' OBJECTION TO EU MEMBERS

REF: COLOMBO 998 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey Lunstead. 1.4(b,d)

11. (C) Summary: The Ambassador met with Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) chief Ulf Henricsson on June 14 to discuss the status of the monitors following the aborted meeting between the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) scheduled for June 8-9. (Reftel) Henricsson asserted that the monitors would continue working as usual despite the LTTE's objection to monitors from EU member states following the May 30 ban of the organization, and the GSL's disapproval of the SLMM's report on Geneva I, released June 10. The alternatives, according to Henricsson are to bring in more contributing nations to the SLMM, for which there are few volunteers, and to remove monitors from EU nations, reducing the mission to roughly 20 from the current 57. The LTTE's pursuit of the SLMM-EU issue will only isolate them further from the international community and democratic norms. End summary.

LTTE Has the Most to Lose

12. (C) The Ambassador met SLMM chief Henricsson on June 14 to discuss the SLMM's position following the aborted Oslo talks, in which the GSL and LTTE were supposed to discuss the mandate and safety of the Nordic monitors (Reftel). Henricsson said Oslo had been a disappointment, but not a surprise.

13. (C) According to Henricsson, the LTTE has the most to lose by objecting to the inclusion of monitors from EU member states in the SLMM following the EU's May 30 listing of the organization as a terrorist group. "If the LTTE sticks with its present stance," he argued, "they'll be the loser. The Political Wing (headed by S.P. Tamilselvan) understands this, but Prabhakaran, having lived thirty years in the jungle, has no understanding of international politics." Henricsson said he hoped the Tigers would give a vague answer to Eric Solheim's five questions, and the SLMM would simply continue to function with its EU-national members.

14. (C) If the LTTE does explicitly refuse to work with monitors from EU member countries, Henricsson sees two alternatives. First, the SLMM could bring in more contributing nations, although no one is lining up for the job. Switzerland and New Zealand could be possibilities, but if Australia bans the LTTE, New Zealand may be less likely to agree to participate. Second, the SLMM could attempt to function with the approximately 20 out of 57 current monitors who hail from non-EU nations Norway and Iceland. As reports of ceasefire violations have risen tremendously since President Mahinda Rajapaksa's election in November 2005, this is not practical.

Flying High Over the Wannu

15. (C) Henricsson confirmed press reports that the LTTE Oslo delegation arrived back at the Colombo international airport on June 14 and will be airlifted to Kilinochchi the same day in an Sri Lanka Air Force helicopter arranged by the Norwegians, though "one member of the GSL had stupidly suggested that the LTTE delegation might be arrested upon return to Sri Lanka." "Purposefully," the monitors Henricsson assigned to accompany the Tiger delegation hail from an EU member state. Henricsson said he would continue to assert that the monitors represent the SLMM, not the EU.

Reduced Access to High Security Zones

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16. (C) Henricsson said that the GSL, angry after SLMM's Geneva I report issued June 10, was being difficult. It had restricted access to High Security Zones (HSZ) in Jaffna on a trip the day before. "They're expressing their frustration with us," Henricsson noted, "but within a few weeks they'll cool off."

17. (C) A cluster of 12 claymore mines that the LTTE alleged SLA Deep Penetration Units detonated in Tiger-controlled territory since June 9 was "obviously done by the SLA side," Henricsson contended. He added that he doubts President Rajapaksa has "full democratic control" of the military and police.

Confidence Building Measures

18. (C) As the Co-Chairs have suggested before, the SLMM wants the GSL to pursue confidence-building measures (CBM) to build trust among the Tamil population. Such CBMs could include the relaxation of fishing restrictions based on Sea Tiger threats that allow Sinhalese fishermen to go beyond 3 nautical miles of the shore while restricting Tamils inland. Henricsson said that if the GSL allowed the SLMM to operate their own boats, they would be able to monitor the fishermen. The SLMM would also like to see more police training, including Tamil-language training for Sinhalese speakers.

Comment

19. (C) Following the EU ban and the Geneva report, the SLMM is taking flak from both the LTTE and the GSL. The SLMM's mission would be severely hindered if forced to dismiss its EU-member monitors, and the GSL's ruffled feathers have also restricted the SLMM's ability to investigate somewhat. If the Tigers know what is good for them, they'll allow the SLMM - one of the few non-Tamil organizations with any sensitivity toward them at all - to fulfill their mandate. The Tigers' continued pursuit of the SLMM issue would only further

isolate them in their political jungle. End comment.
LUNSTEAD